

Roanoke River Implementation Plan Part 2: North Fork & South Fork Roanoke River, Bradshaw
Creek and Wilson Creek
Residential Working Group Meeting Notes

Meadowbrook Community Room, Shawsville, VA
6/16/15, 6-8 pm

Residential Working Group Meeting Participants

Erin Hagan (Louis Berger Group), Katie Shoemaker (EEE Consulting for VDOT), Jarad
Torabinejad, Doug Burton (Montgomery Co.), Zach Martin and Mary Dail (DEQ)

Prior to breaking out into separate working groups, general background on cleanup plans, Total
Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), and sediment and bacteria sources was presented. Specific
information regarding the Roanoke River Implementation Plan process, contents, sediment and
bacteria loads and sources, and best management practices (BMPs). The presentation also
explained the working groups and steering committee and how the public can participate
throughout the process.

During the presentation a member of the public asked about how municipal separate storm
sewer systems (MS4s) factor into the cleanup plan. M. Dail responded that MS4s deal with
regulations concerning stormwater and pollutants that are required and not voluntary. The
Roanoke River cleanup plan is voluntary and will address sediment and bacteria sources in the
non-regulated, non-MS4 areas.

General

1. How did you hear about tonight's meeting?

Signs posted along the river reaches and email.

2. Are there individuals/organizations not present tonight who you think should be here?

Several suggestions were made for individuals or organization that should be present including
the New River Valley Planning Commission, Land Conservancy, Virginia Department of Health
(VDH), Homebuilders association, and/or Trout Unlimited.

The New River Valley Planning Commission has developed the New River Valley Livability
Initiative plan. The Livability Initiative included a focus on improving natural resource assets.

VDH has been trying to obtain a record of septic drain fields in the area and may have GIS data
for septic.

3. Are there other ways that we could get the word out about meetings?

Suggestions include:

- The Link Letter monthly local newsletter
- Channel 109 is the Montgomery County cable channel (Doug Burton, Montgomery County, volunteered to be the contact)
- Local informal gathering of farmers to sell produce and other products – This occurs infrequently at the little convenience store in Elliston/Shawsville
- Utility bills (note that some residents just have water bills, so this option may not get to everyone)
- Ruritan and Isaac Walton League
- Homeowners associations (HOAs) – Could be helpful if there was a list of local HOAs
- Developers – Could reach out to developers to provide education to homeowners on various topics such as septic education including septic maintenance and sediment and erosion control.
- Home Builders Association

Sewer Overflows

4. Are you aware of any sewer areas that may smell of sewage or show other evidence of a sewer leak/overflow, especially during heavy rain?

Participants mentioned that there are sometimes storm sewer overflows in the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg. One participant knew of two separate instances of overflows and said that they would provide coordinates.

A question was asked concerning wastewater treatment plant. It was noted that point sources such as wastewater treatment plants are easier to address because they are regulated under a permit.

On-Site Sewage Disposal

5. Are you aware of problems with straight pipes and failing septic systems in the area? Any particular areas?

No participants knew of any straight pipes or failing septic systems. One problem area was discovered in Wilson Creek watershed during the development of the TMDL though.

6. If funds were available to assist residents with straight pipes and failing septic systems, what would be the best ways to notify people of such funds?

- Mailing information to residents the first suggestion. The mailings could be sent out with other required mailings such as a utility bill (sewer, water), tax bill, etc. Should take into account that not all people have certain utilities and make sure that the most people are notified through various types of mailings.
- Local newspaper
- TV announcements could be made on the local cable access channel. Public service announcements are frequently aired on this channel. A participant mentioned that he frequently used this method of notification and added that the station would likely be glad to add an announcement to the rotation.

There are several communities that are considered urban such as Plum Creek, Elliston, Price's Fork but not Shawsville. The urban areas might have different sewage disposal means.

7. Is there an ordinance in Roanoke County, Montgomery County, Blacksburg, or Christiansburg that requires septic tank pumpouts/maintenance? Possibly during property transfers?

One of the participants said they would check on ordinances for septic maintenance. There probably aren't any ordinances in Montgomery County but there may be in the towns.

- *8. How much does a septic system pump-out cost in this area? How many companies do this type of work?* None of the attendees had expertise in this area.
- *9. Is there a need for alternative systems? What are the regulations associated with alternative systems?*

Alternative systems are becoming more prevalent because there are stricter regulations for the traditional systems.

10. Is there a need for education regarding the operation and maintenance of septic systems?

Yes, there is a need for septic system maintenance education. Usually the recommended cycle for a septic tank pumpout is every five years.

11. What are some local agencies and organizations best suited for this effort? Available programs? 12. How should education be offered?

Sometimes the soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) can provide septic education or the health department.

In the towns, printed materials are usually given out when someone moves into a new house. A suggestion was to provide information on the importance of septic pumpout with these other materials.

A possible place for placement of educational information is on a number of Montgomery County webpages. Examples include the Public Services website which mentions septic tanks, or the building inspections or stormwater webpages. Education could be provided through the Montgomery County Citizens Academy.

In Blacksburg, the building permit personnel are overwhelmed therefore it would be difficult to add the additional task of septic system education.

Companies that provide water quality testing services have been able to inform homeowners about the condition of their utility infrastructure. The public frequently is not aware of the condition of their utilities or even if they do or do not have a septic system. A suggestion was that companies that provide these testing services could also send out an educational flyer.

There are many opportunities to piggyback on other events in the area to provide education such as the annual Home Expo in Christiansburg.

A participant asked if any organizations could take on a full time employee. Maybe the regional commission could do a survey or collect information to determine the need for sewer service.

There could be the need/interest/ability to add sewer to Shawsville or nearby areas. If there are mass drain fields in an area that would be efficient to tie that area to an existing sewer system

The Public Service Authority (PSA) has been gathering information on septic and sewer system data.

Pet Waste

13. Are you aware that pets (i.e. dogs) can be a significant source of bacteria entering surface waters in the state? (This is based on bacteria source tracking data collected by DEQ.)

Some participants were aware that pet waste was an issue. One participant who works for the county indicated that he frequently talks about pet waste issues in various aspects of his job. Issues and importance of pet waste removal are frequently successful in the towns but not as much outside of those areas.

Pet waste station maintenance is not an issue for one department. The parks and recreation department would perform the work but needs additional personnel and funding to perform the necessary maintenance.

14. Have you heard about the need to pick up and properly dispose of dog feces locally?

There were not specific areas mentioned within the watershed that had pet waste issues.

15. Are you aware of any localities in the watershed with a “scoop the poop” ordinance?

There was no awareness of any pet waste ordinances.

16. There are pet waste disposal stations on the greenway; are there others in the area? None specifically mentioned.

- If so, where are they located? (parks, schools, subdivisions, public space) Are there areas where people tend to walk their dogs where such stations could be especially useful?

Areas where people walk their dogs and where pet waste stations could be useful include the Huckleberry Trail and the Frisbee golf park. Kennels are another place where pet waste stations could be located.

- 17. Are there any local education programs related to pet waste? (ASPCA, veterinarians, 4-H, kiosks, etc.)

No specific education programs were known.

- 18. How can we educate homeowners about the impact of pet waste? Would people use a pet waste digester?

One suggestion for education of homeowners about pet waste was through various town registers or licenses (e.g. dog license).

It was suggested to that areas where educational material could distributed or posted include the new animal shelter being built, the Frisbee golf park, and along the Huckleberry trail.

It was suggested that perhaps pet waste is not problematic in the Part II watersheds because of their largely rural nature. With large plots of rural land pet waste is probably not be as big of a problem because of bacteria die off.

Digesters might be used in HOAs or at hunt clubs which frequently have kennels for large numbers of hunting dogs. One kennel for pets that is not far from Montgomery County is Gandalf Kennels; educational materials could be concentrated there or at similar places.

Stormwater

This Clean up Plan will address the need for some stormwater Best Management Practices to collect and treat runoff from residential and urban land areas that contribute to sedimentation and bacteria from pets, failing septic systems, and illicit sewage discharges. These may include rain gardens, bioretention filters, infiltration trenches, vegetated buffers along streams, rain barrels, etc.

- 19. *Do you know of any areas where flooding consistently occurs during heavy rains?*

In Montgomery County, the erosion and sediment control inspectors respond to complaints. Building inspectors are different. Christiansburg has two erosion and sediment control inspectors and Blacksburg has at least one.

- 20. *Have you seen any areas of severe bank erosion along the North Fork and/or South Fork Roanoke Rivers or other tributaries? If so, where?*

There are areas of severe bank erosion in the watershed. One participant worked with a lab at Virginia Tech that recently studied and highlighted areas of severe bank erosion. Some areas would require additional surveying and groundtruthing. The study was provided to Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The participant said that the information from this study could be provided to the Implementation Plan team.

It would be a good idea to have landowners who have already done restoration work on their property to come in and talk to other members of the public about their experiences.

There are places along the North Fork that landowners don't want to do any riparian buffer or stabilization work.

A suggestion was made to reach out to fishermen through the fishing license process or through Trout Unlimited. There are also one or more fish hatcheries in the watershed that could be good places for the dissemination or gathering of knowledge about restoration needs.

- 21. *Do you feel that the term stormwater is recognized by most citizens? If so, what connotation is associated with it (i.e., do people associate stormwater with a fee?)*

There are no local watershed groups.

The problem is the distribution of information.

- 22. *Have any of you implemented stormwater BMPs on your property to deal with runoff? If so, what practices?*

No participants indicated that they had implemented BMPs.

Some stormwater BMPs are eroding or degrading so retrofits would work well. Stormwater BMPs have different types of requirements; some of these would require more work.

If North Fork Road is redone, there would be more impervious surface. This would also bring more development which would also increase impervious surface.

A participant was concerned that developments are always allowed to proceed even though they are harmful for water quality. Mitigation for developments must be better. Someone suggested that maybe the issue is with the stormwater BMP regulations not the BMPs themselves.

- 23. *Are you aware of what riparian buffer zones are? How willing would your neighbors or other community members be willing to create or expand these zones?* NA
- 24. *Are there any public areas where you know of stormwater BMPs having been implemented? What practices? Where?* NA

Other Items for discussion:

25. *Are there any organizations or groups in the area that work on projects related to any of these issues (sewer overflows, sewage disposal, pet waste, stormwater management, stream restoration and cleanup) that aren't represented here?*

Virginia Tech could be a potential partner. Another potential partner is the Mountain Valley Charitable Trust. This organization has been involved in funding of charitable ventures such as the YMCA and the thrift shop in Elliston.

26. *Is there interest in a watershed tour?* NA

27. *What are some of the barriers to implementing water quality improvement projects in the watershed?*

Blacksburg and Christiansburg have discussed stormwater fees or credit systems. Blacksburg has implemented a stormwater utility fee. There could be a reduction in the fee if a property owner implements a BMP. Barriers include the issue of "double taxation". Montgomery County would have a hard time implementing a stormwater fee.

28. *Is there interest in a program like Lynn Haven River Now for homeowners who commit to practices that reduce sediment and bacteria pollution – it could expand beyond the two stressors and cover nutrients (fertilizing, etc.)* "PEARL HOMES are places where people care about our community and our environment and want to do what they can to live responsibly and help protect our resources."

- *Scoring system included and flags are distributed to Pearl Homes*

Participants said it was an interesting idea.